



Dependent Development: The Exceptional Case of Jamaica

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Abstract

The present research assesses persistent underdevelopment and poverty in Jamaica through analysis of dependent development theories. The Jamaica experience questions the validity of economic development models.

Key Questions

Research question:
Does Jamaica conform with a specific model of economic development?

Hypotheses:

- Jamaica has not transformed from a colonial plantation economy into a modern diversified economy inclusive of services.
- The economic development model has not worked in Jamaica because of the consequences of the colonial legacy.



Main commodities produced in Jamaica: coffee, sugarcane, rum, yams, tropical fruit, spices, and bauxite/alumina.

The Issue of Development

While Human Development theory argues:

- expansion of human freedoms;
- empowerment of people through opportunities;
- transformation of social circumstances into actual capabilities;
- improvements in quality of life.

However, Jamaica displays features of underdevelopment consistent with:

- dependent development;
- core-periphery relationship;
- colonial legacy;
- dependency ties with former colonies;
- inadequate financial performance.

Jamaica's Underdevelopment

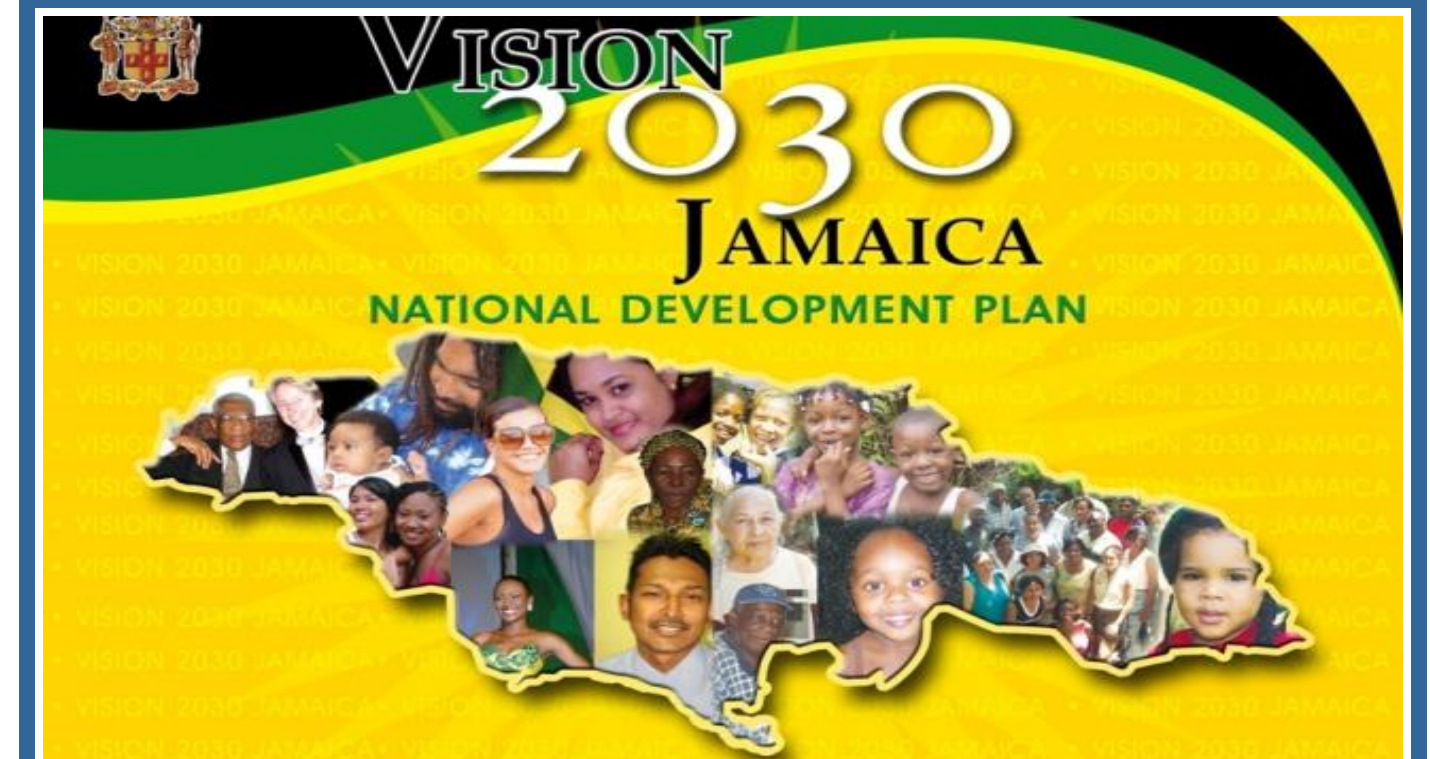
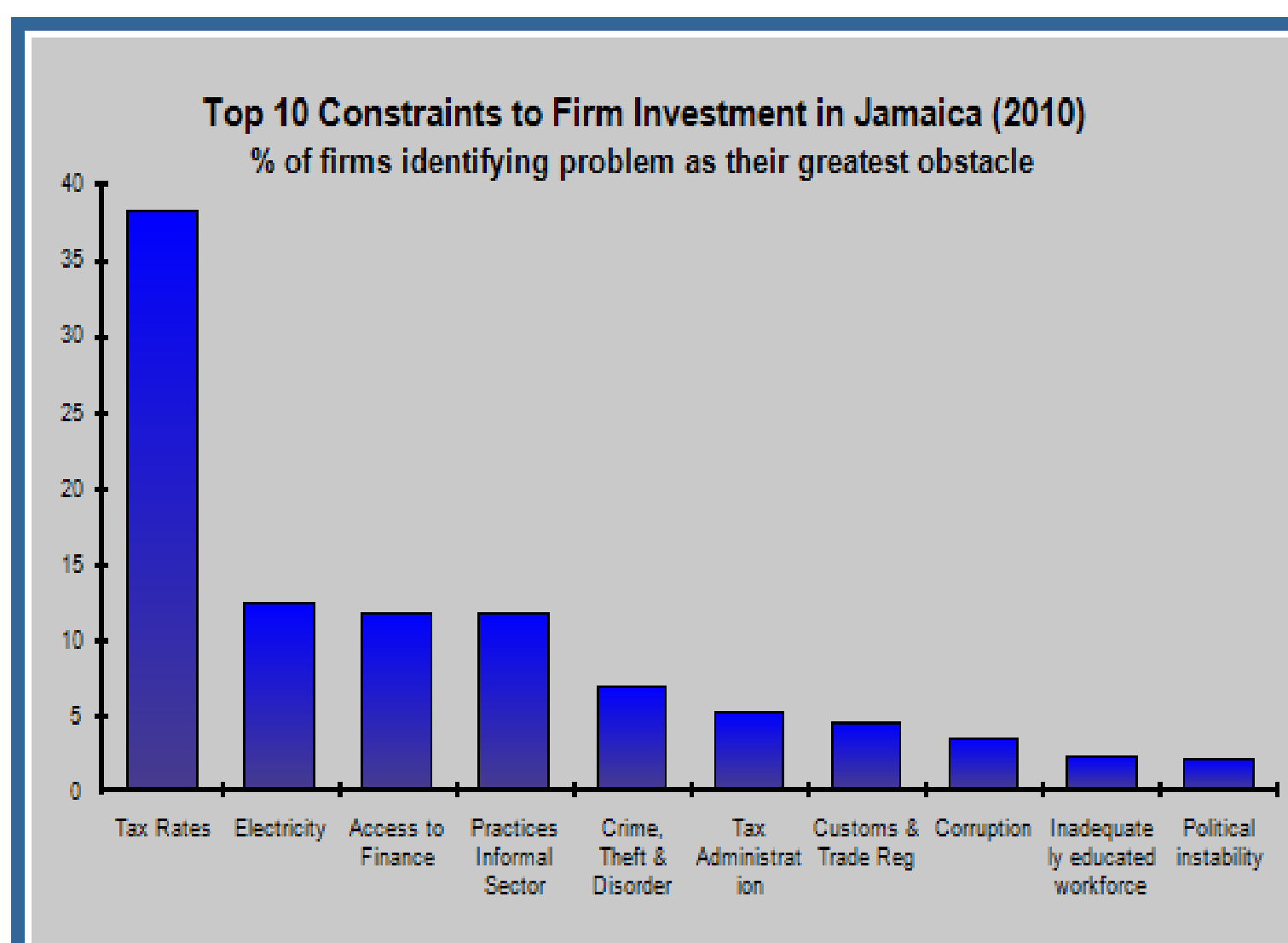
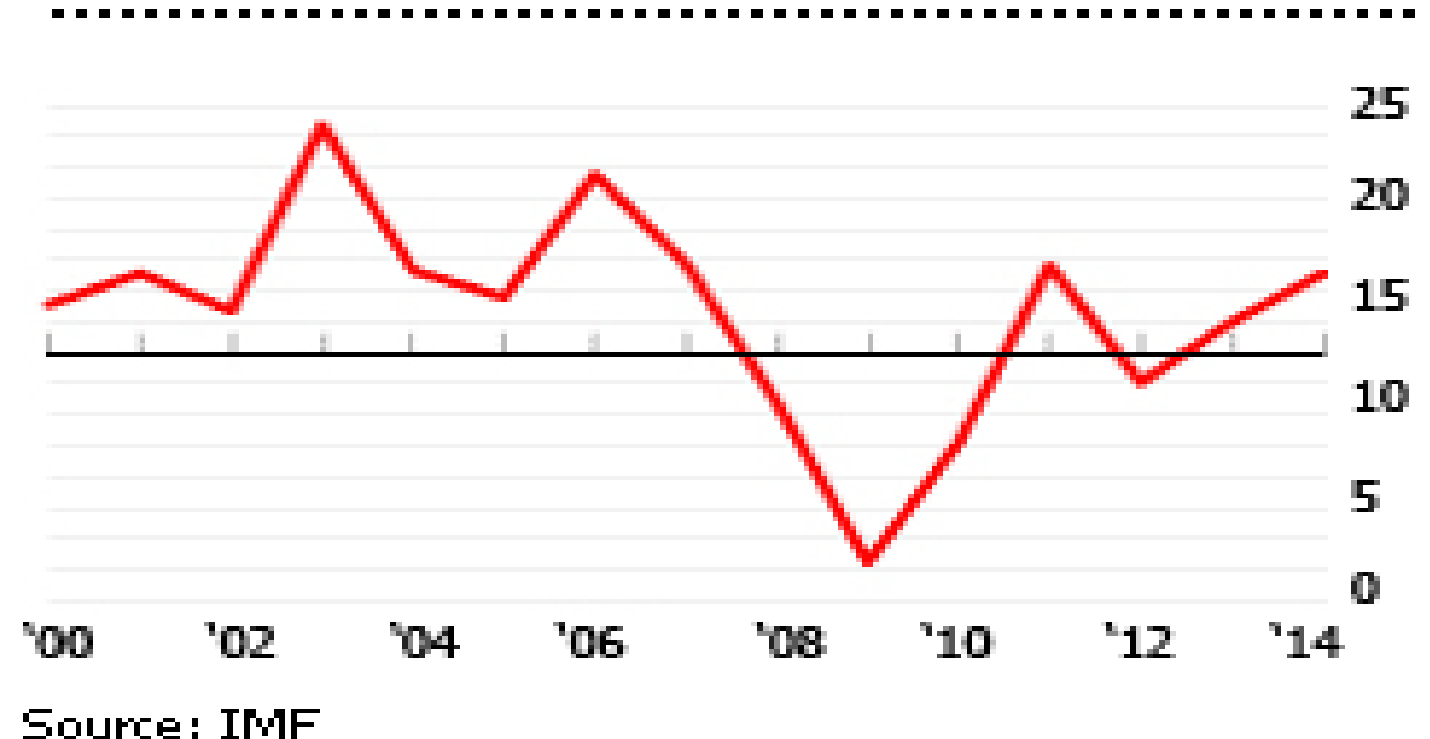
Jamaica is a medium level developing island in the Caribbean Sea with a small open economy mainly based on agriculture, remittances and revenues from tourism, a narrow export base, a strong dependence on external investments, and limited product and market diversification.

- **Population**
2.715 million (2013)
 - **Poverty Rate**
43.1%
 - **Per Capita Income (USD)**
\$7,074
 - **GDP (USD)**
\$14.36 billion (2013)
 - **Human Development Index**
0.730 (2012)
- Source: The World Bank

As a reflection of the colonial legacy with the Global North, Jamaica is heavily indebted and is classified as a primary commodity producer of raw materials with reliance on imports, such as oil, food, and consumer goods.

Internal negligence, irresponsible governance, macroeconomic mismanagement, precarious fiscal finances, vulnerability to exogenous shocks, debt burden, political corruption, and foreign pressure have impaired the implementation of effective strategies towards economic growth and development.

GDP growth demonstrates the failure in breaking the bonds of poverty and endorsing the process of industrialization and modernization



"Vision 2030 Jamaica" is one of the aspirational development plans of the Planning Institute of Jamaica, which aims to achieve progress towards a more sustainable society.

Conclusions

Economic dependency on Great Britain and the United States represents a threat to the expansion of human freedoms and to progressive development.

Jamaica remains a plantation economy mainly subordinated to the interests of large multinational corporations and heavily relying on foreign direct investments for export-oriented sectors.

Jamaica has not built a value added economy because it has continued to adopt economic policies consistent with the interests of the core countries in the Global North.

Resource constraints have prevented Jamaica's economy from reaching its full potential by launching negative trends and stagnation.

Despite Jamaica's vast human and natural resource potential, the historical colonial legacy and the structural fallacies of the Jamaican government have impeded the adoption of a specific model towards sustainable economic development.

Jamaica has failed to escape the trap of poverty and underdevelopment because of the inapplicability of a successful model of economic development.

References

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